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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CONFERENCE OF IRAQ'S NEIGHBORS,
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

¶1. SUMMARY: Government-owned "Oman" praised Omani diplomacy in the Mideast, including engagement with Iran, and expressed hope for positive effects of the Baghdad conference of Iraq's neighbors. Privately owned "Al-Watan" derided the idea of an international women's day "while millions of [women] are widowed, bereaved of a child, distressed, and agonized with the loss of their beloved ones in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia." International women's day received prominent coverage in all Omani dailies this week. There was continuing coverage of violence in Iraq and Palestine. END SUMMARY.

PRAISE FOR OMANI DIPLOMACY

¶2. In an editorial entitled, "Active Moves on Different Levels," government-owned (circulation 38,000) "Oman" wrote on March 10 that:

"Oman has always been keen to actively participate in different international and regional activities like GCC Summits, Arab League or UN conferences, in addition to many other things...The Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Yousif Bin Alawi's visit to a number of countries in the region (including two recent visits to Iran) illustrates how communication is vital, especially during the recent escalation of events. The Sultanate is working hard to deepen the understanding of different parties and make them think more objectively about the consequences of the positions taken by certain parties...Oman is keen on continuing its efforts because it has a deep faith and belief that maintaining peace, security, stability and respecting legitimacies and coexistence is the key to the development of societies, their presents and futures."

HOPE FOR IRAQ NEIGHBORS CONFERENCE

¶3. "Oman" also commented on March 12 about the Baghdad Conference in an article, "Positive Platform to Build On":

"Despite the fact that the international conference for security in Iraq was held for one day, and despite the variations in expectations, it can be said that it was positive in showing that different international and regional parties are concerned about the developments taking place in Iraq. Also, everyone agreed on the necessity of stopping interference in Iraq's affairs. However, with the violent killing and unlimited mixing of cards in Iraq it is difficult to talk about non-interference in Iraqi affairs. It is very important to expend as much effort as possible to rescue Iraq

from its cycle of violence. Thus the Baghdad Conference can be seen as a chance or a hope for the possibility of meeting at a point that all disagreeing parties internationally and regionally can take off from to build a new Iraq that is better."

WOMEN'S SUFFERING IN IRAQ AND OTHER WARS

¶4. On March 9, "Al-Watan" (privately owned, circulation 42,000) carried an editorial on the celebration of International Women's Day entitled "Women...They Are Creating Her Sufferings and Celebrating Her Day":

"Do we need to designate a day to celebrate women's accomplishments? Women do not need a celebration for one day but rather for the whole year, because they make their surroundings happy. Dedicating one day belittles their position. Those who create her sufferings are the ones who insist on designating a day for her. They hurt her every day by making weapons to kill her children and by destroying her house without heeding her screams. They talk about women's rights while millions of them are widowed, bereaved of a child, distressed, and agonized with the loss of their beloved ones in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Somalia. Wars have been taking place for ages, but they always exempted women and children because the warrior was dishonored by killing women and children. However, today the soldiers and war engineers are talking about women's rights at the same time that they make them suffer with their destruction. Muslim and Arab women are not suffering because of their nationality or beliefs, but because they are classified as enemies in a clash of civilizations."

GRAPPO